



***Fostering and Promoting
Open and Honest Communication***
Session 1: **YOU** Talkin' to **ME**

**Behaviors Which Foster and Promote
Open and Honest Communication**

Demonstrating Approachability

- Solicit input. Then listen to it, say “thank you,” follow through, explain why you did/didn’t use their suggestion(s).
- “We” versus “I.”
- Team effort to find solutions to problems.
- Walk around the organization; be visible; create informal opportunities for employees to approach you.
- Risk showing loyalty and trust (lead, take the first step).
- If something goes south, don’t run for cover.
- Demonstrate an understanding/empathy that there is more to life than the job – show caring and nurturing to employees.
- Treat employees as your colleagues.
- Encourage your managers and other office workers to visit the field work sites.
- Admit what you don’t know.
- Participate in a two-way conversation instead of e-mail.
- Talk to employees informally in their environment.
- Go out and talk and listen to rank and file.
- Pay a visit to a job site (just to say “hi,” be available).

Creating Opportunities for Input/Asking for Input

- Have an open door policy – be willing to meet with everyone and anyone.
- Solicit input on what employees see as problems and solutions.
- Put in place regular feedback loops to communicate up and down (management to staff, staff to management).
- Create risk-free channels for employees to communicate with you:
 - Index cards at meetings for Q&A.
 - Suggestion box or program.
 - Written comments.
 - “Tell me what’s going on.”
 - Cross-level advisory committee.
- Regular communication to share work activities, processes, etc.:
 - “All hands” or staff meetings with Q&A.
 - Quarterly meetings.
 - E-mails.
 - Tailgate meetings.
 - Newsletter.
 - Off-site meetings.
- Follow up on inputs/suggestions quickly.
- Regular meetings with supervisors (as a group and one-on-one).
- Solicit honest feedback on current state of affairs/changes; not just once, but regularly.

Listening/Responding to Input

- Input is expected – tell staff your decisions require their input – “tell me when I may make a bad decision.”
- Value input – use in decisions, follow up on information with employees as appropriate.
- Listen – give employees your full attention.
 - Don't answer the phone when in meetings.
 - Don't play with your BlackBerry.
 - Arrive at, begin meetings on time.
 - Don't duck out of meetings *you* called.
 - Make eye contact.
 - Don't cut people off.
- Return calls in a timely fashion.
- Be willing to field hard questions.
- Be willing to take constructive criticism.
- Acknowledge the past, plan for the future.
- Don't criticize right away.
- Listen to minority opinions – they may be the germ of an idea that might work.
- Don't retaliate or get defensive.
- Straighten out misunderstandings/misconceptions spread through the rumor mill.
- Reward positive behavior.
- Celebrate successes.

Ongoing Actions that Foster and Promote Open and Honest Communication

- Walk the talk.
- Be direct – admit mistakes.
- Explain your decision-making process.
- Communicate clear performance and behavior expectations; provide formal and informal feedback as appropriate.
- Share what you know and what you don't know.
- Recognize exemplary behaviors.
- Say/ask:
 - “Thank you.”
 - “Good morning.”
 - “We value you.”
 - “What do you think?”
 - “Help me” or “I need your help.”
 - “Use your judgment.”
 - “I have to say no, but here's why.”
- Capitalize on opportunities to show your support.
- Define what success looks like; acknowledge success and celebrate when it's achieved.
- Empower employees, support their initiatives.
- Deal with conflict head on.
- Communicate horizontally to avoid and prevent "silos" or "stovepipes."
- Communicate upwards: keep management staff in the loop.